

State of California Department of Justice



**XAVIER BECERRA**

*Attorney General*

# Attorney General Becerra: Humboldt County Agrees to System- wide Reforms to Protect Children from Abuse and Neglect

Press Release / *Attorney General Becerra: Humboldt County Agrees to System-w...*

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**SACRAMENTO** – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra obtained a stipulated judgment against Humboldt County's Department of Health and Human Services—Child Welfare Services (Department) and the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office). The judgment was entered following an investigation by the California Department of Justice (DOJ) that uncovered systemic noncompliance by both agencies with California's Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act and the state's Welfare and Institutions Code.

"California's child protection laws require agencies to take immediate action when they learn about potential abuse or neglect. The institutions of Humboldt County entrusted to protect children failed them," **said Attorney General Becerra**. "What can be more important than public agencies performing their duties to safeguard the security and

welfare of our kids? We owe it to our children to enforce these laws vigorously. This stipulated judgment will keep the spotlight on Humboldt County's implementation of system-wide reforms to protect children from abuse and neglect."

The Attorney General's investigation found that the Humboldt County agencies put children's well-being at risk by failing to coordinate their duties to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect. The stipulated judgment, entered in Humboldt County Superior Court, requires extensive corrective measures across multiple government agencies to ensure that every report of child abuse and neglect is investigated by one or both agencies in a timely manner.

As part of the settlement, the Department and the Sheriff's Office also worked with the Attorney General's Bureau of Children's Justice to create a detailed compliance plan that includes:

- Implementing a new emergency response system with wholesale revision of policies, procedures, and practices;
- Developing and implementing a joint electronic tracking system;
- Entering into a memorandum of understanding detailing cross-reporting and coordination procedures;
- Retaining two independent experts, including a tribal consultant to ensure collaboration with tribes, to oversee agreed-upon reforms;
- Providing extensive training for staff;
- Establishing complaint systems to address community concerns; and
- Creating a community advisory committee.

The mission of the DOJ's Bureau of Children's Justice is to protect the rights of children, especially in instances involving the interplay of multiple agencies or disciplines, and to focus the attention and resources of law enforcement and policymakers on the importance of safeguarding the children of California.

A copy of the complaint and stipulated judgment is attached to the electronic version of this release here.

# # #

Attachment	Size
 Filed Complaint.pdf	678.07 KB
 Signed Proposed Judgment.pdf	3.17 MB

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